

## Harvey Picker

Inventor and philanthropist

Last month's announcement of UK patients' increasing satisfaction with their experience in hospital (*BMJ* 17 May, p 1091) was funded by the Picker Institute, which was founded by the philanthropist Harvey Picker. A talented and prolific inventor, he used the profits from his medical equipment company to set up the Picker Institute—with branches in the USA, Germany, and Britain—to conduct research into patients' experiences and suggest needed reforms.

His inspiration was his wife, Jean, a journalist for *Life* magazine and US ambassador to the United Nations. She suffered from a head and neck fistula that eventually killed her. The medical care she received was excellent, but it was not always humane, sympathetic, or geared to her needs.

The name Picker will be familiar to anyone using medical imaging equipment. For two decades Harvey was head of the family business, Picker Medical, now part of GEC. It was a long established maker of x ray equipment, and at the forefront of introducing new imaging technology. For decades the company's profits were put back into researching and implementing ways of improving patients' experiences.

Harvey inherited the company from his father, who founded it. His mother was a teacher. He graduated in physics from Colgate University in Madison County, New York State, which was founded by the toothpaste and Palmolive soap tycoon. He graduated in 1936, took an MBA at Harvard Business School, and spent a year reading politics and economics at Oxford. At Oxford he rescued a woman whose canoe had capsized and was cited for bravery.

On returning to the US in 1938 he joined the family firm, Picker X-Ray. One of his first innovations after the outbreak of the second world war was to adapt existing x ray equipment for use in battle: he made it compact enough to fit in a 3 foot locker and sturdy enough to be parachuted into a



battlefield. It became the workhorse of the allied medical services.

He joined the US navy in 1940 to contribute more directly to the war effort. He was seconded to work on top secret radar development at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He developed ultrasound for oceanography. After the war, he and his father sent the US treasury a cheque for \$3m because they did not want to profit from the war.

When the war ended Harvey returned to Picker Medical, which he led into groundbreaking medical technology, including the first commercially available machines for cobalt radiotherapy and nuclear imaging. He also adapted oceanic ultrasonography for medical imaging.

He married Jean Sovatkin in 1946. She was later appointed US ambassador to the United Nations by Lyndon B Johnson. Despite ill health she retained the post through three administrations and wrote, with Eleanor Roosevelt, a book about the UN.

At the age of 50 Harvey retired from Picker Medical and did a PhD at Columbia University, New York. He taught at his alma mater, Colgate University, and intro-

duced interesting and unusual courses, including the politics of assassination, and the social content of science and technology. He was invited by Columbia University, New York, to be dean of its school of international and public affairs. He then founded the Picker engineering programme at Smith College, Massachusetts, his wife's alma mater.

In 1982, when he was nearing 70, he moved to Maine, where he bought Wayfarer Marine, a large east coast boatyard, from his friend Tom Watson. He reorganised it, employing 100 people all year round instead of 35 seasonal workers. He immersed himself in local philanthropic affairs. A colleague on the Maine Health Care Finance Board said, "Harvey is one of the most remarkably intelligent and modest doers I've ever met. He's used his money extraordinarily well in underwriting national models to improve patient care in hospitals."

Harvey was a member of the US National Science Board and the International Atomic Energy Agency. He served on the board of the New York Philharmonic, two local hospitals, three mental health foundations, the Research and Education Foundation of the Radiological Society, and local civic and marine organisations.

He and Jean founded the US Picker Institute in 1986, and in 1994, when he was 80, he took over its management. The institute aims to advance patient centred care "as seen through the patient's eyes." It pioneered patient satisfaction surveys to improve the delivery of medical services. These have become a standard measure of patient care throughout the world. Jean died in 1990 from a chronic infection of her fistula.

The UK Picker Institute is based in Oxford and is run by Angela Coulter. It is the engine behind many patient centred advances in NHS care, undertaking a unique combination of research, development, and policy activities. It works with patients, health professionals, and policymakers to promote an understanding of the patient's perspective in policy and practice.

**Caroline Richmond**

Harvey Picker, physicist, inventor, philanthropist, and businessman (b 1915), d 22 March 2008.

**OBITUARIES** continue on p 1315

## **Ann Maris Campbell**

General practitioner Livingston, West Lothian (b 1951; q Glasgow 1974; FRCGP), died from ovarian cancer on 15 February 2008.

Ann Maris Campbell trained in medicine and paediatric haematology before entering general practice. She became a full time principal in Balfron, where she was a GP trainer and police surgeon. After moving to Edinburgh in 1999, she became a part time principal in Craigshill, Livingston, and associate adviser in the South East Scotland Deanery, responsible for senior house officer training. She was a lead practice accreditation visitor and West Lothian local appraisal adviser. She leaves a husband, Jim Rennie, and two sons.

**Lesley Skinner**

## **Fiona Mary Dolan**



Specialist registrar in ophthalmology west of Scotland training programme (b 1971; q Belfast 1995; MRCOphth), died from pinealblastoma on 22 December 2007.

Fiona Mary Dolan completed house jobs in Tunbridge Wells and at St George's before joining the South Thames SHO rotation in ophthalmology. She passed the MRCOphth in 2000, and later that year started an MD at the Tennent Institute of Ophthalmology, Glasgow, studying the electrophysiology of retinal vein occlusions. This research resulted in several publications and international presentations. In 2003 Fiona became a specialist registrar in the west of Scotland. She combined her passion for ophthalmology with a very full family and social life. She leaves a husband, Steven Hay, and four children.

**Fraser Imrie, Suzie Drummond, Heather Russell**

## **Alastair Wilson Drummond**

Former consultant psychiatrist and director, Scottish Hospitals Advisory Service (b 1932; q Manchester 1955; DPM, MRCPsych, BA), died from a heart attack on 24 February 2008. Alastair Wilson Drummond ("Tony") did house jobs in Manchester, and after registrar and senior registrar posts he was appointed consultant psychiatrist at West Cumberland Hospital, Whitehaven, and Garlands Hospital, Carlisle.



In 1982 he became consultant psychiatrist at Rosslynlee Hospital, Midlothian, in 1988 being appointed director of the Scottish Hospitals Advisory Service. He was medical commissioner, Mental Welfare Commissioner for Scotland in 1993-4 and locum psychogeriatrician, Northumberland Mental Health NHS Trust in 1995-2003. Since 2003 he was appointed as a second opinion doctor with the Mental Health Act Commission. He leaves a wife, Maggie; two sons from a previous marriage; and two grandchildren.

**James Adams, Maggie Drummond**

## **Duncan Stuart Gibbs**



Former general practitioner Tavistock, Devon (b 1939; q Otago 1965; DA, DOBstRCOG, MRCPGP), died from prostate cancer on 26 March 2008. After house jobs in New Zealand, working in Vancouver and Cape Town, and exploring the world,

Duncan Stuart Gibbs trained in anaesthetics and obstetrics in London. He was then in general practice in Tavistock for 27 years, becoming a trainer and also working as a GP anaesthetist at the Plymouth hospitals. An advocate of the primary healthcare team, he was particularly interested in the caring of those dying at home and founded one of the first practice patients' associations. On retirement he worked for six weeks at the David Gordon Memorial Hospital in Livingstonia, Malawi, which he had visited on his travels. He leaves a wife, Annie, and three children.

**James Allenby, Michael Inman**

## **Miram Goldberg**



Former occupational health physician Marks and Spencer, London (b 1933; q West London Hospital 1961; AFOM), died on 28 December 2007 from multiple organ failure after surgery.

Miram Goldberg came to London in 1959 to complete his final year after initially studying at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. After house jobs he became a partner in general practice in Hampstead. In 1973 he joined the occupational health department of Marks and Spencer's head office part time, from 1977 working full time until he retired in 1991. He promoted screening programmes for coronary risk factors and for colorectal cancer, as well as sponsorship of training of London ambulance crews in prehospital coronary care. From 1992 to 2001 he was on the member panel of the Disability Appeal Tribunal. He leaves a wife, Lyn; three daughters; and one grandson.

**Kate Goldberg**

## **Neil Alexander McCrie Somerville**

Former general practitioner Hull (b 1932; q Edinburgh 1956; DCH, FRCGP), died from prostate cancer, bony metastasis, and renal failure on 9 April 2008.

After qualifying, Neil Alexander McCrie Somerville did his national service as a medical officer in the Royal Dragoons, reaching the rank of captain. He then worked in paediatrics at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh, and in obstetrics and gynaecology at Beverley Westwood Hospital near Hull. In 1961 he joined his father in general practice in Hull, later becoming senior partner until his retirement in 1999. He was also medical officer on the Rally of Great Britain and other motor sport events. In retirement he was a medicolegal adviser until 2007. He leaves a wife, Margaret; four children from his first marriage; and six grandchildren.

**Bruce Somerville**

## **Ian Louttit Wilkinson**



Former general practitioner Stourbridge and Halesowen, West Midlands (b 1926; q Birmingham 1948), d 14 April 2008.

After a house physician job at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, Ian Wilkinson joined a general practice in the Black Country, where he stayed until his retirement in 1986. He especially enjoyed obstetrics, and he was appointed medical officer to the Mary Stevens Maternity Home in Stourbridge. An avid traveller, he drove across Europe with his family in the 1950s and '60s and enjoyed cruising in retirement. He leaves a wife, three children, and nine grandchildren.

**Simon Wilkinson**